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Statement submitted by Women Graduates — USA, Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

The world is facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis since the Second World War. According to a new report from the United Nations the number of refugees and people displaced by conflict and disaster worldwide has reached a record high of 68.5 million. Across the globe, nearly 50 million children have been uprooted. Among them are 28 million fleeing brutal wars in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and South Sudan and 6.3 million migrant and refugee children in Latin America and the Caribbean fleeing violence and seeking to reunite with family members. Refugees and migrant women and children are at particular risk for human trafficking as a result of their vulnerable status, the devastating losses they have experienced, and their precarious life situations until durable solutions become available. According to the United National High Commissioner for Refugees, trafficking risks for refugees are at an ever-increasing level worldwide.

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Sustainable Development Goal 5)

According to the United Nations, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. But this does not apply to women and children refugees who are often treated as disposable people, pawns in larger political games or the unwanted refuse of intractable conflict. Women and children make up the majority of the world refugees. They are left behind or flee when men become combatants or are killed in conflict situations. Children alone make up half of the people of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and children separated from parents or traditional caregivers are particularly vulnerable to a wide range of risks. Forcibly displaced women face barriers to securing economic livelihoods, discrimination in many forms, sexual violence, limited access to service and negative consequences from some cultural practices. The distinctive protection challenges and risks that women face as refuges are vulnerable factors for human trafficking.

Women Graduates — USA Inc. believes access to social protection systems and public services is imperative to reduce the problem of trafficking risk of migrants and refugees. Assistants to woman refugees would include specific measures to prevent individuals from falling into the hands of human traffickers. Whether in a camp setting or in an urban situation, those responsible for providing protection and assistance should undertake a mapping of populations at risk within the broader refugee population. Women should have education programs for refugees, to inform them of the risks of trafficking and how they can be reduced. Programs intended to expand economic opportunities are a critical anti-trafficking measure. Clearly, the best way to reduce trafficking risk for refugees is to provide a durable solution-one that offers permanence, legal status, safety and means of economic support. It's It is critical for greater collaboration and information-sharing between those working on refugee protection and assistance and those working on human trafficking. Each sector needs to be educated about the risks each population faces and where these risks intersect.

Peace, justice and strong institutions (Sustainable Development Goal 16)

Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development provide access to justice for all is a challenge for women and children. War creates trafficking victims. Zones of conflict are characterized by a lack of basic human security, where lawlessness rules. Women and children are physically unprotected from the violence of combatants and non-combatants alike and have no legal protection or remedies because of the absence of law enforcement and the dysfunction of legal systems.

Among the distinctive protection factors and challenges that increase human trafficking risks for women and children are: physical insecurity; social economic and political marginalization; victimization by smugglers facilitating refugee movement; experience with sexual violence; social or other negative consequences resulting from sexual violence; pressure to engage in survival sex; severe disruptions to family structure; and lack of legal protection. Refugees are often treated as commodities in the political negotiations between nations-states, unwelcome wherever they land after desperate flight. As a subject within a border flow of human migration, refugees are subject to dehumanizing practices and curtailment of their rights by border enforcement practices intended to discourage migration, and curtail migrant rights, unwelcome wherever they land after desperate flight.

The distinctive protection challenges and risks that woman face as refugees are vulnerable factors for human trafficking. At the heart of the solution is to recognize and support the recognition of and support for refugees' talents, strengths and agency. Women Graduates — USA, Inc believes that when refugees are able to participate in protection solutions, peace-making, to contribute to the societies they join, and to support their families, the risk of being trafficked is reduced. Partnering with refugees and refugee communities in a meaningful way to identify and implement solutions is the best way to provide protection that addresses actual needs. At each point in the migration passage, it is imperative that improved systems are put into place to identify and offer legal protections to women and children who are victims of human trafficking. At border crossings and in-migrant communities, refugees who go unidentified run the risk of falling into the hands of criminal predators. True legal protection requires that nations provide a protective status under the law, offering the means for individuals to access such protection. Border enforcement policies and Migration control should increase the number of women enforcement agents, especially when unarmed, who are less threatening while carrying out enforcement policies and migration control balanced by mechanisms for ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable in serious risk of falling into the hands of traffickers.

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goal 17) is included to assure that countries and organizations cooperate instead of compete. Developing multi-stakeholder partnerships to share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial support is seen as critical to overall success of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is essential to reduce human trafficking, a150.2 billion dollar a year illegal industry. Woman and girls make up 75 per cent of the 68.5 million people trapped in human trafficking worldwide. Women refugees and trafficked women share characteristics of poverty, marginalization and powerlessness. In a world increasingly characterized by the complex developments of globalization and increased migration, multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential for sharing knowledge, expertise, technology, finance and relevant data to ensure a comprehensive international approach is used in the protection of women and children.

In the last two years, a new partnership has emerged in response to the greatest increase in the number of migrants and refugees since the second World War. Women Graduates — USA, Inc. supports the final drafts of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration completed in July 2018 to be voted on by the United Nations Member States in December 2018. This plan supports shared responsibility among Member States to increase resettlement sites throughout the world within three years, expedite more consistent processing rules, facilitate family reunification, and increase protection strategies. Women Graduates — USA, Inc. believes the focus on pathways to resettlement includes increased educational at all levels through greater cooperation between education institutions and governments, and a concentrated effort to identify employment skills to enhance labor mobility. Increasing educational and employment opportunities prevents vulnerabilities to violence, slavery and trafficking while reducing economic dependency. For more effective pathways to resettlement there remains the need for greater cooperative and collaborative partnerships among national governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector.